

# Clotilde of France

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# CLOTILDE OF FRANCE

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## CHARACTERS:

CLOVIS	.....	<i>King of France</i>
AURELIAN	.....	<i>A Roman Knight</i>
AVITUS	.....	<i>Archbishop of Geneva</i>
GODEGESIL	.....	<i>Uncle to Clotilde</i>
THEODORIC	.....	<i>Seven year son of Clovis</i>
CLOTILDE	.....	<i>Princess of Burgundy</i>
COUNTRESS FRIEDMUND	.....	<i>Her Aunt</i>
FRITIGILD (15)	} .....	<i>Countess' Daughters</i>
GUNHILDE, (10)		
ABBESS PANCRACTIA	.....	

*Warriors, Guards, Pages, Maidens, Little Girls.*

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N. B.—Pictures of Costumes of the period may be found in Vol. I, Guizot's "His. of France" and very good descriptions as to colors and fabrics, also costumes are given in "Ierne of Armorica" by A. S. Bateman.

*This little play is inscribed to the faithful sons and daughters of Holy Church in old France, and to her exiled Religieuse, trusting that the representation of it by the children of America may prove a ray of light to encourage them in the gloom of persecution, and be an assurance that the country whose Faith was established by the prayers of a St. Clotilde may yet have more sons to aid her in holding that faith and reviving her pristine glory as a champion of our Holy Mother Church.*

M. S.

R. S. U.



# CLOTILDE OF FRANCE

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## ACT I.—GENEVA.

SCENE I.—Convent in Geneva.—A number of women, some with black dresses and black veils, and some with white veils in back ground, arranging chairs and tubs. Clotilde brings chair, etc., to left, as Aurelian enters at right-front. Aurelian (looking at Clotilde, then at a miniature in his hand). Yes, 'tis she, the eyes, the hair are alike. Now, ye gods, be propitious my pilgrim's staff and scallop must aid me now to gain speech with the princess, and bear this message of King Clovis. (Holds up ring.) Approaches Clotilde and seats himself in her chair. The princess Clotilde with towel in hand kneels before Aurelian.

*Aurelian.* Art thou the Princess Clotilde, lady?

*Clotilde.* I was, but now am only the lowly handmaid of the Lord.

*Aurelian.* And yet destined, one day, chosen of God, to be the foundation stone of a great kingdom.

*Clotilde.* Say not so. I am but a poor novice and an orphan.

*Aurelian.* (Drops ring into the tub.)

*Clotilde.* (Starts up frightened.)

*Aurelian.* Nay, start not, but, I pray you, most gracious virgin, of your charity, that you resume the lowly position that you have just quitted. (Clotilde kneels and appears to wash his feet.)

*Aurelian.* I would have speech with you. This ring is voucher to you that I come not here without

high authority, nor without an earnest purpose. I pray you vouchsafe a gracious ear to my tale. It savors not of harm to yourself, but of the deep devotion of a great king to your cause.

*Clotilde.* Say on, I list.

*Aurelian.* Gentle princess, the great king and valiant warrior, Clovis the Merovingian, knowing how unjustly you are detained in captivity by your uncle, Gundovald, the murderer of your father and all your family. (Clo. starts.)

*Clotilde.* Murderer of my father!

*Aurelian.* Bids me to offer to you my services of his arm and sword and to rescue you from this unjust prison and restore you to your rightful position,——

*Clotilde.* Unjust prison!

*Aurelian.* Nay, more, the king bids me to ask you to be his wife, his queen, to let him protect you with his valor, and share with you his throne.

*Clotilde.* Now, indeed, thou dost speak in parables; thou whom I would call audacious stranger, but for the earnestness of thy voice and friendly manner.

*Aurelian.* Do you not know, gracious princess, that your father, mother and brothers were inhumanly put to the sword by your uncle, Gundovald, who usurped the throne of Burgundy, placed yourself and sister here safe from the awful fate by the holy Avitus, after much entreaty and fervent prayer for your lives?

(Clotilde gazes fixedly at Aurelian with horror, then falls as in a faint; the others gather around her, kneeling so as to conceal her.)

*Aurelian.* (Approaches the Abbess. I pray you, reverend mother, if you think I am to blame in this matter, have me conveyed before some person authorized to hear my explanation of this untoward event. I

would fain have speech of the gracious princess again.

*Abbess.* See the princess again! Thou shalt not see her again I promise thee; but some one else shall see thee and require an atonement for thy strange behavior in this room to-day. The holy Avitus shall hear of thy proceedings. May our Blessed Lady be forever praised that the venerable archbishop is just now within the walls of this house, her sacred refuge.

*Aurelian.* Now forever praised be Divine Providence, (bows reverently.) I ask for nothing better than to be brought into the presence of the holy man of God. When he looks upon me he will see no stranger to him.

*Abbess.* Who art thou, thou strange man? But come, I will lead you to the archbishop.

(CURTAIN.)

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SCENE II.—ROOM IN A CONVENT.

(Abbess and Countess Friedmänder sitting beside the princess Clotilde, who reclines in an arm-chair.)

*Clotilde.* It is a temptation of the evil one to lure my thoughts from holy meditation which performed unworthily will unfit me to pronounce those blessed vows, and devote my life to the holy purpose of expiation, which will deliver my parents from the penalty of their sins. He said they were murdered; he offered me the sword of a great king to avenge them, to deliver me from this prison! Oh, say, most venerable mother, what does it mean? This is not a prison but a blessed refuge, a heavenly home!

*Abbess.* Calm yourself, my dearest daughter, try to collect your thoughts, scattered by a passing accident.



You may have been a prey to the swimming of the senses, only an illusion, a passing dream!

*Fried.* Yes, yes, (soothingly) it must have been a dream.

*Clo.* (Showing ring.) This is no dream. And now I remember he said it was Clovis, who sent it to me. Clovis, the Merovingian, the great king, a valiant warrior! Who is Clovis, dearest mother, and what is he to me?

(Enter Arch. Clo. rises, bows, with arms crossed.)

*Arch.* This is no common chance. My first step must be to question the person who brought the message armed with such high authority. I will go to see him, and thou, my daughter, put thy trust where thou knowest it can be firmly fixed.

*Abbess.* Is the Princess Clotilde, my beloved daughter, to keep the ring, venerable father?

*Arch.* I shall be better able to answer thee when I have spoken with this messenger. Retain it in thy possession, my daughter, for the present. It is a valuable token, and one which seems to vouch for the right of the message.

(Exit Arch. attended by Abbess. The sound of organ and chanting of psalms is heard outside, while Clotilde and Fried. converse.)

(Enter Arch. and Abbess.)

*Arch.* Thou must keep the ring, my daughter. The day may come when it will be in thy power to return it to him who sent it.

*Fried.* Holy Father, thou knowest my anxious love for the daughter of my sister. May I not be allowed to see this pilgrim, and ask him more concerning his message?

*Arch.* I have learned all that is needful or good for to us to know. Besides this pilgrim is already on his way back to him who sent him. (to Clotilde) Thou



must arm thyself with patience, my daughter, and a constant fortitude, a great crisis has arrived in thy life, not unforeseen by those who have thy dearest interest at heart.

(Clotilde during this evinces conflicting emotions, surprise, joy, despair.)

*Clo.* O holy father! shall I not be permitted to consecrate my life to God?

*Arch.* My daughter, courage! Thou shalt be permitted, no doubt, to devote thy life to the service of God; whether it shall be exactly in the manner thou dost propose to thyself or not. Canst doubt for an instant that all is arranged by Him who orders all our ways for us?

*Clo.* Oh, say not, holy father, it will cause me to leave these sheltering walls, where is peace and happiness and the loving care of one who has been to me more than a mother!  
(Looking tenderly at Abbess)

*Arch.* I may not tell thee now. Lose not thyself in vain imaginings, my daughter, but cast thyself at the feet of the Divine Master, and say with His Blessed Mother, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

(*Clo.* goes to the crucifix on a table or shrine in center of stage, and kneels in an imploring posture; the *Arch.* at left, as the curtain falls, raises hand in benediction. Abbess and *Fried.* heads bowed in reverent attitude. The organ and chanting outside, then one voice sings: "Beati omnes qui ambulant in via Domini, Corona justitiae pacisque valde magnae coronabit eos.")

(CURTAIN.)

(*End of Scene II., Act I.*)

## SCENE III.—THE SAME

(The Abbess seated left back at table with crucifix.  
Enter Princess Clotilde, in white, attended  
by the Countess Friedmand.)

(Right front.)

*Abbess.* (Rises and advances toward Clotilde.)

*Clo.* (Kneels to Abbess.) Bless me, mother, bless your daughter whom God has called to go beyond these walls. The Abbess extends her hands and places them upon the princess' head, then raises and embraces her.)

*Clo.* I await the envoy, who is to escort me to my future lord, King Clovis, ah, pray for me, Mother, that I shall be a true handmaid of the Lord of all.

*Aurelian.* (Enters as a knight.) Fair Princess whom I hope to greet as Queen of France, I await your final decision. (At the first words of Aur., Clotilde starts and looks at him searchingly.)

*Clo.* (Aside.) Ah, the pilgrim! (to Aurelian) I am willing to abide by the decision of the holy Avitus in this matter, who considers that in this appeal of the valiant warrior, I am called by God to be the spouse of this great King. My Reverend Father in Christ, the holy Avitus tells me much of thee, thou priest and soldier, thou pilgrim of Christ, and now noble ambassador of my future lord! Thou shalt ever be to me as a brother, thou wert as the announcing angel to convey to me the mandate of the most high. (Aurelian kneeling, raises the hand of the Princess to his lips.) I salute you, lady, as the Queen of France. To-morrow it shall be my happy privilege to escort you speedily to my master, King Clovis. (Clo. bowing says, "Behold the handmaid, etc." Several ladies enter, one bearing a mantle of blue cloth, one a veil, and another a circlet of gold. The Countess arrays

the Princess. During the robing, the organ is heard outside and the chanting of the psalm, "All the glory of the King's daughter is within, in golden borders; clothed round about with varieties she shall be brought with gladness, and shall be brought into the temple of the King."

(CURTAIN.)

End of Act I.



## ACT II.

### SCENE I.—SOISSONS.

Gardens of the "Villa Clotilde."

(Clotilde, surrounded by a number of young girls chatting and weaving garlands. A clattering is heard outside as of horses.)

(Enter Gunhilda.)

*Gun.* Oh, what a handsome creature! No, a man. O such a a lovely pair of dark grey eyes.

*Frit.* Really did the creature have a pair in these troublesome times, 'tis well to be able to keep one good eye.

*Gun.* Under his helmet his long fair hair fell in curls over his shoulders.

*Frit.* Now I caught a glimpse of the creature and saw a wolf's head, glistening eyes that seemed seeking for some one.

(Clotilde starts up to go into the house.)

Nay, my dear cousin, go not in, it was only a man. May not he come from the King to say we are to set off at once? Would we could go in by torchlight as arranged for us.

*Clo.* It is the king himself. (Aside) What have I to fear? She said he was handsome, and beauty must be kind, but oh, he is a fierce warrior, too.

(Exit.)

*Gun.* Now, Friti, you have frightened the princess, and we must all follow her into the house, ah! me, but he was handsome.

(Exit.)



*Frit.* Ah, me, but it was frightful, I tell you, maidens; come, let's run in.

(Exeunt.)

(Enter Clovis, L. Front.)

(Aurelian, R. Front.)

*King.* (Taking Aurelian's hand) Didst meet my messenger at Dijon? I feared the villa would not be ready. It is not so bad, is it? Does she like it?

*Aurelian.* (Smiling) Which question is to have my first answer? It was at Dijon I met thy messenger, and right glad was I to find we were to halt there.

*King Clovis.* But the Princess, the Queen, where is she? Did I see her sitting here as I came by the outer wall? There were several maidens with her. I would see her, meet her alone. Can it be so arranged Aurelian?

*Aurelian.* But for thy message, I should be now in Soissons, my good lord, for she is well escorted. King Godegesil joined us after we left Besangon. He loves his royal niece right well, and vows he will give her away to you himself, to-morrow. The Countess Friedmund and daughters are here also.

*King.* They are all heartily welcome. But can'st thou manage a private interview for me, my good Aurelian, so that she may see me unawares, and not be frightened?

*Aurelian.* (Laughing) Thou art not much of a countenance, my good lord, to affright a maiden. I will get speech of her alone.

*King.* Dost think, Aurelian, thou canst lure her into the garden here under pretence of showing the rose laurels.

*Aur.* That is not difficult my good lord. Right glad am I to forward thy good pleasure. If thou wilt await her here behind yon hedge, it may not be

long ere I lead her here to look at the shrubs and fine trees.

*King.* Say not, I shall be here; she might fear to come, expecting to meet me. (About to remove his helmet.)

*Aur.* Remove not thy helmet, my lord. It fits thy warlike countenance right well.

*King.* I would not affright her, Aurelian, with this wolf's grinning jaws. Rather would I put on this gold circlet, (takes a link circlet from a case concealed in his tunic.) I look not quite so fierce, and thou knowest I am proud of my hair.

*Aur.* (Laughing) It well beseems a doughty warrior to take such anxious pains to look well in the eyes of a young girl just sixteen, and bred all her life in a convent. If I judge her rightly, she will much prefer the helmet. True, thou lookest more the lover thus, and right handsome both ways. I say this to encourage thee; it is not meet that thou shouldst lose thy self-confidence when thou requirest it most.

*King.* Doubtless (passing to and fro) it will return, my good Aurelian, especially if I see the maiden approves me. Go thou and fetch her. (Exit *Aur.* by R. B.) (The King retires behind a screen or hedge L.)

(Enter Countess, Gunhilda and Fritigild, R front.)

*Countess.* No, no, Gunhilda, thou art not come with the queen, she does not want thee nor thou either Friti. Come, maidens, let us away.

*Gunhilda.* (Pinching Friti) I know now it was the King we saw on horseback. And he is waiting over there near the conservatory, waiting to see his bride.

*Friti.* If it be as thou sayst and the King is there, it is fittest we should be far away. Remember, this is no longer child's play and thou wilt have to learn

discretion in a country where women are looked up to, I hear as to something little less than divine, I foresee for thee a return to the stern rule of Queen Glaswintka if thou learnest not soon to forget thy kittenhood, and achieve a becoming gravity.

*Gun.* (Pouting) Cease your dry sermons. I'll be kittenish as long and as often as it suits my humor. There, there, comes the Queen on Aurelian's arm, going to meet her fate. Let's watch the meeting.

*Friti.* No, we must be gone (taking *Gun.* by the arm).

(Exeunt L. F.)

(Enter Aurelian and Clotilde R.)

*Clo.* O my lord, Aurelian, when shall I see the King, that I may thank him in person?

(Enter King, B. L.)

*Aur.* Thou seest him now, lady, come tell him now all thou hast been saying to me since we left Geneva.

*Clo.* Clasping her hands and running to the King, is about to kneel (Exit *Aur.*) My lord and King!

*King.* (Quickly raising *Clo.*) Not so, fairest royal maiden. Not so in my country (taking both hands draws her to his side) where women are our queens, our best prized jewels. Nay, thou art my wedded wife. Thou art not frightened?

*Clo.* Oh! no—no (glancing shyly.)

*King.* Is this thy good aunt, the Countess Friedmunda, coming this way, sweet one? I love her for all her love and tender care of thee. Wilt tell her so for me, most fair maiden.

*Clo.* You must tell her yourself, my lord, she will rejoice to hear your commendation from your own lips. O, my good lord! what frightful tale was that of which you first sent me word? It seemed enough, when I reflected on the dreadful fate of my parents, to change my childhood into sudden womanhood.



*King.* Shall I revenge them, my beloved? Thou knowest I laid my sword at thy feet for that purpose.

*Clo.* Oh! no, (shuddering.) There has been enough bloodshed in that unhappy country. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

*King.* It shall be as thou wilt, my queen.

(Enter Countess F. as if looking for flowers.)

Ah, then, here is my aunt Fried., and may I kiss my aunt, is it not the fashion in Burgundy? (Kissing F.) Fashion or no fashion, (laughing) it is nevertheless a good fashion, is it not?

*Fried.* Yes, my lord King, when it comes from the heart, as I feel sure this did. (*Clo.* is looking earnestly at *King.*)

*King.* Confess now, my sweet, thou hoped I was not quite so frightful as Attila, the Hun? What wouldst thou have said had I been such a ferocious looking animal as they say I was? Thou art glad I am not? So am I for thy sake. Confess now, thou wert well pleased to see I was not a monster? Nay, I am not vain, I can not help it if they say I am handsome. I should not be my father's son if I were not "The Handsome Chilperie" men used to call him.

*Clo.* You would not be so (archly) handsome, my lord, if you had not a good and noble heart. The spirit that dwells within you speaks out in your face.

*King.* Nay, now flatterer! but it is sweet to hear thee praise me to my face so prettily. Well thou must help me keep it as thou likest it best. The Archbishop did promise me thou shouldst be to me as a guardian angel. Say, my queen, wilt teach me to rule myself and all around me in the great kingdom of which he says thou art a foundation stone?

*Clo.* (Raising her eyes in supplication to Heaven) O, Thou, the Ruler of all kingdoms, make this noble



heart all thine, bring him speedily to Thy true faith, which alone can impart the graces that will fit him to be the ruler he desires.

*King.* May no tears but those of joy e'er dim thy sweet eyes. Now we must speed our way to the holy temple.

(CURTAIN.)

End of Act II. Scene I.

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ACT II.—SOISSONS.

SCENE II.—After the Marriage. Grand Hall in palace at Soissons. A dais under a canopy, armed guards at rear, each side. A procession of courtiers followed by Aurelian, Prince Theoderic, King Clovis with crown and a long cloak with train held by two pages. Enter L. F. music: "*See the conquering hero comes.*"—Handel. Procession of little girls dancing with garlands, followed by ladies. Then Countess Friedmunda, Gundahild, Fritigild, Princess Lantaldis, King Godegesil with Clotilde leaning on his arm. Enter R. F. The king meets them at the foot of the dais, King G. approaches (Leading to King, Clotilde.)

*King G.* O, King, I give her to thee. Mayst thou love her and cherish her and may she be to you a true comforter. (A page bearing a crimson cushion on which is a crown of gold points. Hands it to Aurelian. Clovis takes the crown of lilies from Clotilde, who kneels, then taking the golden crown places it upon Clotilde's head.

*King Clovis.* Thus I acknowledge thee before these chiefs and peoples, as the chosen partner of my throne and state, and thus I crown thee, Clotilde, Queen Consort of my new kingdom of France. (He then raises her and seats her beside him) (Martial music) and cheers clashing of shields, cries of "Long live King Clovis," "Long live Queen Clotilde." "France forever." (When the noise

subsides, the Prince Theo taking a distaff from an officer, presents them to the Queen.)

*P. Theo.* May it please you, royal lady and mother, to spin for your loving son a woolen tunic for the winter. (Clotilde raises him and kisses him on both cheeks.) (The Prince then kneels to the King, and lays his sword at his feet.)

*Theo.* My royal father, I have won all the prizes at the "field of Mars" and now claim the golden circlet, and thou may'st be sure, I will do my best to win every prize in my own class! The brother of Hermanfrid will have the sword and shield of expectation. But then he is fifteen, and I am but seven.

*King.* Bless the royal boy! Thy ambition is growing fast! Well, here is thy circlet, which your new mother, the queen, shall place upon thy curls. Thou must win thy gold chain next, my boy.

*Theo.* Ah, (sighing,) I may not have than, till I have fought at least my first battle, and won it. It is so foolish, I may not grow faster. Were I but old enough I should even now be with my king and father (kissing the king's hand) then he rises and kneels to the queen, who places the circlet on his head. He takes the queen's hand and kisses it. The queen raises him and places him beside her chair with her arm around his waist, looking affectionately at him, and he at her, while the guards clash shields and all shout: "Long live Theodoric, the Prince Theodoric of France." Theo. bows to the crowd and resumes his position near the queen.

*All.* "Long live the King! Long live the Queen! Long live the Prince! France forever!"

(Martial music.)

(CURTAIN.)

### ACT III.

SCENE I.—Soissons, after two years. A room in palace. Clotilde and Theodoric.

*Theo.* My queen mother, let me see my new brother. I hope he will not die like my first brother, Ingomar.

*Clo.* Pray God to grant me the privilege and honor to rear a son to serve Him as a true Christian Prince; but he is ill, and your father will not believe that he will recover.

Enter King, greatly excited.

*King.* The boy, the boy, Clotilde, he will die?

*Clo.* Nay, my lord, let us trust to the good God. (Exit *Theo.*)

*King.* It could not be otherwise, he will die presently, as did his brother, having been baptized in the name of Christ. If he had been consecrated in the name of my gods he had not died.

*Clo.* Say not so, my lord. Rather let me thank God, who has thought me worthy a child whom he has called to His kingdom. (Enter in haste Countess Fried.) What is it, aunt? my boy, my prince! say not he is dead!

*King.* Speak, woman, hast the Christ again betrayed me? •

*Fried.* Nay, my lord, I haste to say e'en now he opens his pretty eyes, and smiled, and will live.

*Clo.* (Falling on her knees) Oh, how shall I thank thee, my Sovereign Lord, for all thy mercies.

*King.* (Raises Clotilde tenderly) My Queen, forgive me. I did wrong to distrust thee and add to thy sorrow



by upbraiding thee, as if it were thy fault he was ill. Ask me anything you will.

*Clo.* Nay, my lord. Both his illness and your royal anger were decreed by God to try my faith in Him. It is also I who have failed in my trust, and almost brought this chastisement upon me; nevertheless, if you will in your kingly goodness grant me a boon, good my lord, let it be an offering of great thankfulness to Him who, in the midst of wrath has remembered mercy, even the offering of your own gracious heart, my lord, and king. Can you refuse to give up your false idols, in return for so much compassion as my God has shown this day?

*King.* Fairest and best of women, it is not now the hour in which I can do this thing. But let thy prayer ascend for me night and day to thy God, for now is come the hour of still further trial to thee and of great emergency for me.

*Clo.* O my lord! What is this thing you speak of? But I know, if your heart is but toward God, that He will deliver you from all danger.

*King.* Thou must hear now, sweet wife, what I have to tell thee. Even this morning I received a message from Seigbert of Cologne, bidding me prepare quickly to go to his aid. The Alemanni are mustering in great numbers on both sides of the Rhine and the Maine, whilst another body has attacked Seigbert himself. I must hasten to meet them. They hope to crush me. They are jealous of this great nation of the Franks, which I have established in this fair province of Gaul. I am not sorry the moment has come. I mean to show them that their ancient foes, the freemen of Germany, are still their conquerors; that to us the allies and heirs of ancient Rome, belongs alone the empire, the glory and the civilization of Rome.

*Clo.* My gracious lord, you are going to conquest, but in order to be victorious, invoke the God of the Chris-



tians. He is sole lord of the armies. Though your enemies were a hundred against one, you would triumph.

*King.* I will not forget, my queen, thou art indeed my guardian angel. Under the sign of the cross I will conquer like Constantine of old. I shall return to thee in triumph to be baptized, to make all thy sons kings. Take care of my little one. Nay, do not weep, remember thou art my wife, the wife of a warrior going forth against his enemies and thine, a king going to do battle for his people. Smile on me, for thou wilt not see me again until I return to thee, a conqueror, and a Christian. (Exit King.) Clotilde kneels before a crucifix on a table.

(CURTAIN.)

End of Scene I.

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ACT III.

SCENE II.—Same. Return of Clovis. Enter Clotilde, L. F. King Clovis, R. F.

*King.* Clovis has vanquished the alemanni, and thou, Clotilde, hast vanquished Clovis. The business thou hast so much at heart is done. My baptism can no longer be delayed.

*Clo.* Thanks be to thee, oh my God! To the Lord of Hosts are both these triumphs due! (Enter Theodoric.)

*Theo.* Come, my royal father, the people are calling for thee. (Voices outside.) (Exit King.) What may be it, my royal mother, hark, what say they! (Voices outside.)

*First Voice.* My lord King, to thy valor and thy piety, we owe our victory.

*All.* Yes, to thee we owe our victory.

*Second Voice.* We abandon our mortal gods.

*All.* Yes, we abandon our false gods.

*Third Voice.* And we are ready to follow thy example, and worship the immortal God of the Queen Clotilde.

*All.* Yes, the God of Queen Clotilde. (Enter King, and embraces Queen. Enter Aurelian, Countess and daughters, ladies and knights.)

*King.* Yes, my Queen, the guardian angel of France, thy God shall be my God, the God of my people forever.

Tableau, King, Queen and Theodoric surrounded by others.

At the words, "The God of Clotilde's" the music of the "Te Deum" should be played outside, and at the last word of Clovis, it should be sung in a triumphant chorus, till curtain.

(END.)